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**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
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"Connecting communities and improving the lives of all generations"

Otto Solórzano
Acting Director

August 28, 2020

TO: Supervisor Kathryn Barger, Chair
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Janice Hahn

FROM: Otto Solórzano 
Acting Director

SUBJECT: **YOUTH@WORK 2020-21: REINVESTING IN OUR YOUTH IN
RESPONSE TO COVID-19 (ITEM NO. 5, AGENDA OF JULY 7, 2020)**

On July 7, 2020, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) adopted a motion (Motion) by Supervisors Kathryn Barger and Hilda L. Solis instructing the Chief Executive Office to work with the Department of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS) to identify up to \$20.7 million in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020-21 budget to continue the current level of Youth@Work (Y@W) programming without disruption due to the COVID-19 (COVID) pandemic. The Motion directed that particular attention be given to youth of color, youth who are experiencing homelessness, justice involved, foster youth, LBGTQI, low income or otherwise disconnected youth, and to provide a funding plan to sustain the Y@W program in the FY 2020-21 Supplemental Budget.

The motion also directed WDACS, the Los Angeles County Workforce Development Board (WDB), the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), and the Department of Human Resources (DHR) to 1) identify work-learning opportunities within County departments for youth to assist in COVID-19 related projects and 2) work with available training resources in County departments, America's Job Centers of California (AJCC) and Community-Based Organizations (CBO) to provide in-person training opportunities and to report back in 30 days with a plan to implement this County youth COVID-19 response effort.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Y@W pairs paid work experience with access to additional employment, training, and support services provided through a regional network of more than 40 AJCCs. Y@W provides youth ranging from ages 14 to 24 with subsidized wages for up to 20 hours of soft skills development and 100 hours work experience with private, public, or non-profit organizations. The program prepares participants to be work-ready and develop fundamental skills necessary for job retention and connections to educational pathways that will serve as a foundation in selecting a career. Activities are implemented through a regional partnership that includes WDACS, the other six workforce development areas within the County, businesses, educational entities, community organizations and other partners. Y@W places approximately 10,000 youth annually in a variety of different sectors, including retail trade, public administration, educational services, and arts and entertainment.

COVID-19 has significantly impacted the economy and exacerbated additional new barriers now faced by youth interested in accessing jobs and job training. Workplaces have dramatically changed, with businesses either completely shutting down, modifying workspaces and/or a reducing their on-site workforce to comply with physical distancing orders, or a transition to telework for work that can be completed remotely.

Given this major shift, the County's workforce system has had to take into account barriers that have become amplified for youth such as lack of access to broadband connectivity and economic conditions of a youth's family due to changes in employment status of parent(s) or legal guardian(s). Furthermore, while access to transit in order to travel between work and home existed prior to the pandemic, there is the added layer of complexity due to the risk of using public transit during the spread of a contagious virus and limited schedules of busses and trains. This is especially significant, as data shows that disadvantaged populations, particularly people of color, are more likely to rely on public transportation and are at a higher risk of becoming infected.

This report describes the various in-person and remote learning and training efforts and strategies that have been put into effect or are being developed to address the directives in the motion, while meeting the challenges of a new economic and employment landscape.

RECRUITMENT AND SERVICE DELIVERY DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

WDACS quickly pivoted and modified its outreach and recruitment methods, its service delivery, and provided AJCCs needed supports and tools for operation. In response to the immediate need to ensure youth have access to resources, WDACS implemented the following changes and updates to the program. First, we enhanced the webpage to

streamline and expedite inquiries by youth and employers. Second, WDACS updated its program policy in accordance with Department of Public Health (DPH) COVID-19 guidelines. Finally, WDACS instituted trainings for AJCCs to ensure continuity of service delivery.

Enhanced Y@W Webpage

WDACS launched a new user-friendly and informative Y@W web page in early August. The upgrade streamlines linking inquiries of interest from youth and businesses to the appropriate AJCC based on geographic location. To promote more equitable access to services, the page collects updated demographics to include: LGBTQI, in addition to the existing categories of foster youth, youth experiencing homelessness, CalWORKs recipients, CalFRESH recipients, justice involved youth, parenting teens, and teen parents-to-be. The support of the public announcements by your Board and media coverage has resulted in approximately 500 youth interest forms so far. We are also finalizing the new worksite interest portal on the site that we will promote to employers to establish new host sites.

COVID-19 Policy and Procedures

Y@W program policy was updated in accordance with DPH COVID-19 guidelines for health, safety, and social distancing requirements consistent with the Safer at Work order. A parental consent form for minors was created to assure that the youth's parent(s) or legal guardian confirm their understanding of the possible dangers associated with COVID-19 and knowingly allow their child to participate. The worksite agreement form between AJCCs and employers was updated to confirm that worksites comply with all federal, state, and local policies in accordance with COVID-19 safety, including the provision of necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for youth. AJCCs physically inspect each worksite to ensure compliance before any youth can report to work and conduct site reviews through the duration of a youth's placement to ensure employers' compliance with all workplace safety measures.

Building AJCC System Capacity to Engage Youth Virtually

WDACS is preparing to launch mandatory on-line support trainings to the AJCC network on virtual engagement and best practices for serving youth. Training will include guest speakers, digital platform presentations, and various topics geared at transitioning the system and youth to our new way of doing business. In partnership with the Opportunity Youth Collaborative (OYC), the first in a series of trainings for the system is scheduled for September 22, 2020 on *Virtual Rapport Building with Youth*. The focus is on strategies and best practices to build meaningful connections and rapport with young adults in a time when all interactions are virtual.

COVID-19 IN-PERSON WORK LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

WDACS has met with various County departments including DHR, DPSS, and AJCCs to identify work-learning opportunities in COVID-19 related projects. DHR has outreached to all County departments to recruit additional worksites. We are leveraging Y@W to support high-priority County humanitarian projects, including Project Room Key (PRK) and emergency food distribution. In addition, through our external business and community partnerships, we are placing youth at sites that have in-person positions.

Expansion of In-Person Placement at County Departments

WDACS in partnership with DHR and DPSS will continue to identify County departments that Y@W can support through the in-person placement of youth, as departments become ready to host. We will be supporting the Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks and Recreation) with some of their community programs. The WDB has requested youth to provide insight and recommendations on workforce strategies that can be implemented by the County. The Treasurer and Tax Collector the Agricultural Commissioner/Weights & Measures, and the Fire Department have requested youth to be placed in clerical positions. WDACS and DHR are in early stages of developing a strategy for Y@W participants to work remotely and determining how to initiate, test, and scale up such an effort.

Countywide Youth Bridges Program (CYBP)

CYBP is the County's public sector hiring strategy for youth developed in partnership with DHR and with the support of all County departments. Normally, CYBP would host over 2,000 youth each year. Due to the County hiring freeze, the Step 1 work experience component via Y@W is operating at a much smaller scale and the Step 2 12-month internship component (Youth Worker) is temporarily on hold for most departments. WDACS is working with DHR to phase-in appropriate worksites as departments reopen. WDACS is also working with DHR to re-open the Youth Worker exam (12-month internship) and to make this list available to departments approved for emergency hire. As of July 1, 2020, so far 52 youth have been placed in positions with duties that range from clerical support to in-person service delivery with the below County departments to complete the Step 1 work experience that prepares them for the year-long internship:

- Internal Services Department (ISD) - 4
- Probation Department - 20
- DPSS – 1
- Parks and Recreation - 2
- WDACS – 25

COVID-19 Humanitarian Efforts

Acknowledging how COVID-19 has deeply affected health and economic stability of County residents, WDACS has identified opportunities to support the community by leveraging Y@W. WDACS has emphasized these types of placements to its network of AJCCs and has prioritized these worksites for eligible youth. As a result, a total of 80 participants have been placed with County departments, non-profit organizations, and CBOs supporting humanitarian efforts.

- **Project Room Key:** PRK provides housing assistance to individuals experiencing homelessness to reduce the spread of COVID-19 by placing them at hotels and motels across the region in coordination with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. Y@W participants assist PRK staff in the daily operations of intake, distribution of food, clothing, and supplies, and in monitoring common areas. Fourteen 14 of the 35 PRK sites are Y@W worksites. Twenty-five participants have been placed in 6 sites so far.
- **Emergency Food Distribution:** Youth provide an invaluable public service at WDACS' Community and Senior Centers and other non-profit foodbank centers. They assist with food distribution to the elderly and families, the packing of equipment and meals, other resource distribution operations, and learn safety measures. So far, 55 youth have been placed and WDACS will expand its reach by partnering with the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank for participants to assist with warehouse operations and the packaging and distribution of food to the community.
- **Los Angeles Cleantech Incubator (LACI):** In partnership with Probation, 15 youth connected to the juvenile justice system will learn to assemble PPE for healthcare facilities in the County. The effort introduces youth to concepts in manufacturing and LACI has a robust internship program that will provide additional experience and internships within the clean tech industry such as technical training, interpersonal skills development, and industry recognized certification.
- **Contact Tracing:** Older youth were sought to support the DPH program and supplement the County Disaster Service Workers. The limited availability of allowed program hours could not meet the demands of the assignment. Candidates are required to complete a 40-hour training course before the work can begin. WDACS will support this endeavor with CARES Act funding and will explore future alignment with CYBP.
- **COVID-19 Testing Sites:** WDACS explored the possibility with Department of Health Services (DHS) to have youth assist at County testing sites. Due to the likelihood of becoming exposed to the virus, the risk was too high to pursue.

- **Essential Businesses:** WDACS' AJCC network has placed 288 youth in work experience at essential businesses adhering to the DPH Safer at Work Order. These essential businesses include grocery stores, pharmacies, mail and shipping businesses, and banks. The Order allows many businesses and public sites to be open, with caveats to follow guidelines to help prevent COVID-19. Recruiting these worksites has been another point of emphasis for the AJCCs. Youth will assist businesses that are in dire need of support and help with customer service and administrative work among other work activities.

VIRTUAL AND REMOTE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

WDACS and its departmental and external partners are committed to providing hands-on, in-person learning opportunities. During the pandemic, WDACS and its partners must provide youth with virtual and remote learning opportunities while continuing to seek out and establish in-person work experience training. WDACS, AJCCs, County departments, and partnering youth support organizations, in collaboration with employers, must address the exacerbated barriers that have arisen, such as access to broadband internet service. This will ensure that the same number of participants, if not more, are served by Y@W as in the previous years. Furthermore, we recognize the importance of serving small businesses economically impacted by the pandemic, which need to augment their labor force and may not have the necessary physical space to host youth in-person and remain in compliance with public health guidelines. In addition to providing direct financial support through CARES Act funds to devastated small businesses, WDACS will also offer youth as a resource for much needed labor during this challenging period as part of the relief package.

Developing A Remote Work Experience Model

WDACS is working with several partners from education, Bixel Exchange (a project of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce that connects employers to diverse, under-represented high school and community college students who are seeking access and exposure to careers in technology), and internally to help define job duties, policies, and procedures by pairing virtual learning and work. Youth receive ongoing assignments and supervision via online platforms to keep youth connected to their WDACS team members. The lessons learned in Y@W's current model will assist in finalizing the policy and procedure requirements around remote work experience. We will then make remote work experience available to all employers, with an emphasis on small business.

During the business roundtables that were held in April in response to the Economic Resiliency Motion (April 28, 2020) every business partner voiced their commitment to support youth and acknowledgement of the importance of engaging our youth in meaningful work as part of the recovery efforts and for our economic stability. WDACS will

promote youth as an integral part of the rebuild solution through the Y@W remote work experience opportunities. We will outreach to businesses, with an emphasis on small businesses, via multiple avenues and partners, including through social media, our revamped website and via outreach to chambers of commerce and other business organizations. Furthermore, we will partner with the Office of Small Business housed in the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA) and the Los Angeles County Development Authority to expand our reach.

- ***Virtual Personal Enrichment Training (VPET):*** In collaboration with the OYC, we transformed the Transitional Age Youth World of Work (TAYWoW) 20-hour curriculum from in-person learning to a virtual group-learning environment. The TAYWoW provides the fundamental soft skills necessary to succeed on the job at any age. Youth can safely develop their soft skills from home, receive peer support in an engaging environment, and earn wages.
- ***Virtual Career Exploration (VCE):*** The final stages of securing a VCE online platform are underway and will be implemented by September 2020. The platform will open a youth's field of interest about high-growth sectors recognized by the County by engaging them through various workforce interactive modules. These sectors include construction, advanced manufacturing, transportation and logistics, hospitality and tourism, healthcare and information and communications technology. The experience will be curated to the youth's abilities and interests and will work through practical, virtual exercises that build upon specific proficiencies required for a long-term, sustainable career.
- ***Project Based Learning (PBL):*** PBL will assist youth in fulfilling work assignments for private, public, and non-profit organizations and allows youth to collaborate with peers to complete community service projects. In partnership with the Women's Leadership Project (WLP), a civic engagement and service-learning program based at several South Los Angeles high schools, youth virtually help prepare lesson plans, organize special events, prepare and participate in speaker series, and conduct research to further develop programming – all from the convenience and safety of the youth's home. As of this report a total of 6 youth have actively participated in remote work experience. We will evaluate the success and impact of this remote work assignment for potential scale up across school districts in the County with priority given to the fifteen (15) schools involved in the Community Schools Initiative.¹

¹ On January 15, 2019, the Board unanimously voted to direct the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to identify funding for DMH to develop and enhance mental health and well-being services for a targeted group of school districts. WDACS, in partnership with LACOE and County Chief Executive Officer are committed to prioritize services and to create systems to address equity through the Community Schools framework by establishing a more systemic and coordinated referral process. The goal is to provide youth with a menu of services that offer access to work-readiness through personal enrichment training, career exploration and work experience. In addition, AJCCs will offer youth access to other service they provide such as referrals to DMH, counseling and tutoring.

- ***Virtually Assisting Information Technology (IT) and Digital Media Focused Small Businesses:*** Businesses in the IT and Digital Media fields are usually 100% in telework mode. In partnership with Bixel Exchange, we are working to pair youth to employers in the IT and Digital Media fields. Thus far, there are 70 employers interested in hosting youth. We are planning to launch this effort in Fall 2020. Small businesses and startups will benefit from the youth's support and will help to increase youth level of digital literacy. In addition, the partnership will begin to define and develop accessible on ramps that can connect youth to future work in the sectors of IT, and Film and Digital Media, among other sectors that pose viable opportunities.

IN-PERSON WORK EXPERIENCE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

WDACS has met with various County departments and CBOs to identify new in-person training opportunities. WDACS, through its existing programming, prioritizes youth experiencing homelessness, justice involved youth, youth of color, foster, LGBTQI, low income, and other disconnected youth. The pandemic has created the conditions to strengthen the connections between Y@W and the many different work experience training programs throughout the County. WDACS will utilize the sector-based training strategies to leverage Y@W, including pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs. In addition, WDACS is expanding its outreach to essential businesses through the AJCC network to place youth in in-person work experience opportunities.

Sector-Based Programs

WDACS will continue its efforts to link Y@W into some of its key sector-based training programs as listed below:

- **HireLAX:** WDACS has partnered with Los Angeles World Airports, Parsons, Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building Trades Council, the City of Los Angeles, LA Southwest College, the Flintridge Center, and Second Call to provide construction industry-based cohort program called HireLAX Apprenticeship Readiness Program. This program consists of pre-apprenticeship MC3 certification training and includes soft skill development, work readiness mentoring, and participant assistance through supportive services for eligible participants. HireLAX provides participants with an opportunity to meet and interview with construction unions and select specialization throughout the training course to ensure that they will successfully establish a career in the construction trades. HireLAX serves as a pathway for Y@W participants who are interested in pursuing long-term job and career opportunities.

- **Antelope Valley (AV) Social Service Career Pathway Pre-apprenticeship:** WDACS, in partnership with Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), DCFS, AJCCs, and OYC, will prioritize foster youth for placement in subsidized work experience in the social and human services fields, such as child development, early childhood education, senior services, and workforce development in the AV. The initial cohort of approximately 20 participants will be placed at approximately 10 worksites in the AV and paired with ongoing mentorship and peer support. Young adults will be directly immersed in the social services field from both an educational and hands-on experience that serve as the framework for a pre-apprenticeship. This effort also supports the CSI effort by prioritizing foster and other system-involved youth who are students at Littlerock High School and may be interested in this exploring this career path. WDACS is partnering with Antelope Valley College, College of the Canyons and Brandman University to continue youth participation in credit bearing courses that will assist the youth with further career exploration through possible CYBP linkage.
- **Green Pathway Career (GPC):** In partnership with ISD, the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments, Emerald Cities, Hathaway Sycamores, and the Southern California Regional Energy Network (SoCalREN), the GPC program will help TAY enter emerging careers of the sustainable economy, by teaching them skills required in the high-growth energy efficiency industry. WDACS will provide the funding for work experience, recruit, and place youth in identified positions.
- **Film and Digital Media (F&DM) Career Pathway Pilot Program:** WDACS, in partnership with Arts and Culture, is working to implement a F&DM Pilot that will provide creative economy career pathway training, exposure and paid internship opportunities to under-represented County youth, ages 18-24. WDACS plans to leverage Y@W to help cover job readiness costs and subsidize wages for work experience and internships, which will help incentivize participation from employers that cannot cover the cost of wages.

FUNDING

CEO has identified \$7 million to ensure a robust Y@W Program during the summer months. We anticipate serving nearly 2,500 youth with these resources by the end of October 2020. Since July 1, 2020, WDACS has already placed approximately 1,300 youth. A more comprehensive report on Y@W funding will be provided during Supplemental Budget.

Each Supervisor
August 28, 2020
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CONCLUSION

Thank you for the opportunity to share our current and planned efforts for the County's Youth@Work initiative. Should you have any questions, please contact me directly, or your staff may contact Kevin Anderson, Special Assistant, at kanderson@wdacs.lacounty.gov.

OS:KA:HS:rkl

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
Chief Executive Officer
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September 29, 2020

To: Supervisor Kathryn Barger, Chair
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Janice Hahn

From: Fesia A. Davenport
Acting Chief Executive Officer

REPORT BACK ON YOUTH@WORK 2020-21: REINVESTING IN OUR YOUTH (ITEM NO. 5, AGENDA OF JULY 7, 2020)

On July 7, 2020, the Board of Supervisors (Board) directed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), working with the Acting Director of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS), to identify up to \$20.7 million in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020-21 Supplemental Budget to continue the level of Youth@Work funding and services provided in FY 2019-20 during the current fiscal year. The motion directed that CEO and WDACS consider any Youth@Work funding that was unspent in FY 2019-20 due to the disruption of COVID-19, to maintain services during FY 2020-21, without disruption, in particular for those who are experiencing homelessness, are justice involved, youth of color, foster, LGBTQI, low income, and otherwise disconnected youth, and report back to the Board in the FY 2020-21 Supplemental Budget with a funding plan to sustain the Youth@Work Program (Program) to the extent possible.

FUNDING

During the FY 2020-21 Recommended Budget phase, WDACS requested \$20.7 million in ongoing net County cost (NCC) (\$2.1 million for administration costs and \$18.6 million for program costs) for the Program. This request included an increase of \$2.7 million from the prior fiscal year to allow WDACS to serve the same number of youths in FY 2020-21, while accounting for increases in the minimum wage. WDACS typically services approximately 10,000 youth annually.

In the Supplemental Budget for FY 2020-21, the CEO is recommending \$20.7 million in funds for the Program, which includes \$5.0 million in ongoing NCC and \$15.7 million in one-time unspent funds from FY 2019-20. This is the first year of incorporating ongoing funding into the budget to sustain the Program. The \$15.7 million in one-time funds identified by WDACS includes some unspent funds from the Program from the prior two fiscal years, as well as NCC savings WDACS achieved due to the availability of additional State and federal funding in FY 2019-20.

In addition to the NCC funding recommended by the CEO in FY 2020-21, WDACS also continues to partner with the Department of Social Services (DPSS) and expects to receive \$7.0 million in ongoing funding from DPSS to provide services to CalWORKs and GROW participants, as well as \$1.0 million in one-time-only funding from the Probation Department to provide services to probation youth.

The CEO will collaborate with WDACS during upcoming budget phases to identify additional ongoing funding for the Program, if available, consistent with the Board's motion.

SERVICES

The Program pairs paid work experience with access to additional employment, training, and support services provided through a regional network of more than 40 America's Job Centers of California. The Program provides youth ranging from ages 14 to 24 with subsidized wages for up to 20 hours of soft skills development and 100 hours work experience with private, public, or non-profit organizations. The Program prepares participants to be work ready and develop fundamental skills necessary for job retention and connections to educational pathways that will serve as a foundation in selecting a career. Activities are implemented through a regional partnership that includes WDACS, the other six workforce development areas within Los Angeles County, businesses, educational entities, community organizations and other partners.

WDACS reported to your Board on August 28, 2020 with a plan for maintaining the Program services during the COVID-19 pandemic. The key elements of this plan include:

- Enhanced and modified recruitment and service delivery through a revamped webpage to streamline and expedite inquiries by youth and employers; an updated Program policy in accordance with Department of Public Health COVID-19 guidelines; and trainings for America's Job Centers of California to ensure continuity of service delivery.

- COVID-19 in-person work learning opportunities that include placement of youth in County departments and County-led humanitarian efforts such as Project Room Key, food distribution, manufacturing of personal protective equipment, and placement of youth at essential businesses.
- Virtual and remote learning opportunities that include a remote work experience models and career exploration with online platforms; development of customized curriculum for a virtual platform for transitional age youth; project-based learning programs with a focus on civic engagement and service learning; and partnerships with employers in information technology and digital media.
- In-person work experience training by leveraging sector-based programs to further integrate participants of the Program into pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships, leading to long-term careers.

Should you have any questions concerning this matter, please contact me or David Seidenfeld at (213) 974-1457 or dseidenfeld@ceo.lacounty.gov.

FAD:JMN:MM
MM:DS:AB:bjs

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel
Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services